

THE CONFESSION OF A WHOLESOME MURDERER WHO BEGS TO BE HANGED.



MURDER OF ASHWORTH AT DENVER.



CHIEF OF POLICE RUSSELL'S STATEMENT.

W. R. Hearst, the Journal, New York:

The confession of Albert Hense Downen, comprising twenty-five separate and distinct cases, is straight so far as we have been able to verify it. I have no doubt that every word of it is true. Thus far it includes two actual murders, one assault upon a man with intent to kill, the shooting of a woman, also the shooting of a Chinaman and three stage robberies. The remainder of the crimes which he confesses are hold-ups.

He will be tried Saturday, and will probably be convicted of murder in the first degree. He says he has not told half of the story of his crimes, and promises to make another and complete confession, after he is sentenced to the gallows, that will be a revelation. He certainly is not crazy, and I believe thoroughly that every word of his confession is true.

Denver, Col., Oct. 27, 1896.



THE KILLING OF THE CHINAMAN AT COLFAX, CAL.

An inherited conscience, the legacy of generations of God-fearing ancestors, is a bad piece of property for a latter-day bandit to carry about with him.

That is the lesson of the worse than wasted life of Albert Hense Downen, who, arrested for a paltry offence, has of his own free will told the Denver police that he is a murderer many times over, that there is blood on his hands and on his soul, that his play of crime is played out, that he wishes they would hang him as soon as possible and be done with it.

That is where the born criminal of Lombroso differs from the black sheep in a good family, of which Downen is the type. The born criminal joys in his misdoing. The "good fellow gone wrong" burns, robs, kills and chokes down his sorrow until he can do it no longer. Then he quits.

Downen has quit. But he has made a record of crime which the annals of wrongdoing in the Western country will have hard work to match. He is forty-five years old, and in the quarter of a century that he has devoted to crime he has known all the sensations that sin can afford to an

The man who has held up treasure-laden stage coaches and rifled the pockets of offensive citizens at the point of a pistol has now thrown up his hands. Why? Because he felt the whole world against him. Into the arms of the police he has fled for protection from pursuers who were the creatures of his own imagination. Pursued by the terrors of remorse, finding no peace in all his wanderings, dreading every foot-step and shrinking from every shadow, he now looks to the gallows to free him from the creatures of his guilty conscience. The rest and quiet which a life of crime had robbed him of he now believes can only be found in death. "I have no pleasure," said Downen in his confession of 40,000 words to the Denver Chief of Police, "and I was afraid of being arrested at any time. I now wish to have the affair over as soon as possible, so that I will not have to spend much time in jail."

When taken into court before Judge Butler at Denver last week Downen protested against having counsel assigned to him. He insisted on pleading guilty, and said he wanted to die quickly. Nevertheless, the Court appointed Lawyer Robert M. Foote to act for the prisoner. In the meanwhile a careful investigation has been made into the marvellous story of crime related by Downen. When first taken into custody upon suspicion of being concerned in a small robbery, he asked to see the Chief of Police, and to that official told of a series of crimes of which he claimed to have been the perpetrator. These included several murders and a large number of assaults and highway robberies covering a period of a quarter of a century. His story was so astounding as to be incredible.

Downen gave dates and the names of places and persons to the Chief of Police, and asked that they be investigated. He ac-

cused himself of the murder of Joel W. Ashworth at Denver, on June 27. But there were no witnesses of this murder and no way of establishing Downen's connection with it. It was a murder of which almost any man could have accused himself, if he desired to be hung. But Downen gave the Chief of Police the particulars of another murder, relating the story in such a manner as to leave no doubt of his guilt. This was committed in California more than eleven years ago. It had been regarded as a case of suicide, but it now turns out to have been one of the most daring and reckless murders in the history of the State. It was the first time that Downen had killed a man, and on that day to this, he says, he has had no peace. He told the Denver Chief of Police that one evening in June, 1885, he was walking in St. James's Park, at San Jose, Cal., when he saw a man who bore the appearance of having wealth. He jumped in front of the stranger, and, pulling a pistol, commanded "hands up." The stranger resisted, and Downen promptly shot him dead. When this story was telegraphed to St. James from Denver, the Chief of Police in the former place said there was no truth in it. He wired to Denver that there had been no murder in St. James's Park that year. The following day, however, a careful search was made of the books of the San Jose police, and there was found the evidence that Downen's story was true.

These books disclosed the fact that on the morning of June 8, 1885, the body of a dead man was found in the northeast corner of St. James's Park. He had been shot through the head, and a .32 calibre, six-shot pistol, with one empty chamber, was found near the body. The man was identified as H. B. Bann, a stranger who had come to San Jose a few days before. The evidence before the coroner's jury was meagre, and a verdict of suicide was brought in. Downen explained last week that he had placed the pistol beside his victim.

Convinced by what he learned from San Jose that Downen was telling the truth, Chief Russell, of the Denver police, set to work to verify, so far as possible, every one of the numerous crimes of which this conscience-stricken man accused himself. They make an appalling list. His crimes around Denver alone, where Downen has been identified as the mysterious lone highwayman who rode a yellow bicycle, are enough to place him in the front ranks of the knights of the road.

Albert Hense Downen was born near Denver. He appears to have been the one black sheep of his family. His parents were well-to-do and highly respected, and his aged mother is now living with one of her sons near Roseman, Mont. David Downen, another son, is a prosperous ranchman living near Salt Lake City.

Downen appears to have been predisposed toward a criminal life. The police of Denver have dug out from the musty files of the District Attorney's office an old indictment in 1873 for what time. Early in that year he was arrested from a brother of Twombly. He was held over for trial and released in \$400, but he skipped out for California as the bond was forfeited.

After reaching California, Downen was then twenty-one and went to work in a saw mill in Visalia, in Tulare County. He became acquainted with the Wells Fargo agent at Visalia and one was to be sent away the next night. He came his scruples and held up the stage. He was a favorable location, but some reason the driver changed his route and Downen's plans were frustrated.

In describing his first stage robbery the prisoner said: "I was disappointed in not securing the \$6,000 and concluded to try again the next night, and this time I succeeded and secured \$585 from the treasure box and passengers."

"I was somewhat nervous, but made a good bluff and called upon imaginary confederates to cover the driver and passengers with guns. I made the people get down and line up along the roadside and robbed them. Vest Townsend, the driver, in making a report of the hold-up, said there were at least a dozen robbers in the gang. I never worked with an accomplice. A few days later I rode on a train in company with the Sheriff of Tulare County and talked with him about the robbery."

This was the turning point in Downen's career. He had fled from justice at Denver, it is true. But the charge of stealing a mule was a paltry one, and he made one earnest effort to earn an honest living and lead a respectable life. But after his first stage robbery he abandoned himself to a life of crime. He never afterward made a serious effort to become a decent, law-abiding citizen.

When he had robbed the California stage he says a sense of insecurity began to worry him. He became nervous and restless. Previously he had only stolen a dumb animal. But now he had held a loaded pistol at a human being's head and committed a crime for which he could be hanged. Vague terrors began to possess his mind. He was opposed to organized society. He had defied the moral and the legal code.

So he resolved to abandon himself to the life of crime in which he had commenced. Confident of his own ability to defy the law single-handed, he set about planning another stage robbery. Downen says in his voluminous confession that after a visit to San Francisco, St. Louis and Denver upon the process of his next stage robbery he returned to his home.

There he again held up the considerable plunder he carried off with success. In making his horse, and for this he was arrested. He imagined he was wanted for the stage robbery, which he confessed, whereas if he had kept quiet he would have been charged only with the theft of the horse. He was tried and convicted and sentenced to twenty-two years' imprisonment at the San Quentin Prison.

"I was told," says Downen in his confession, "that if I would behave myself in prison I would not have to serve a long sentence and would be pardoned. After being imprisoned seven years I became a trusty in the laundry, and, stealing some clothing from a guard, I escaped, and after travelling at night for a week I found I had not moved twenty miles from the prison."

"I lived on fruit during the time, but, becoming hungry, I begged for something to eat at William Brown's ranch, near Petaluma. The women in the house gave me a good supper, which I was eating when Brown returned home."

"Brown recognized me from a description sent out by the prison authorities and, with a gun in his hand, sat down between me and the door. I finished my supper and, getting up, Brown levelled his gun at me and told me to surrender. I refused and he shot me in the neck. I knocked him down with a heavy lamp, setting fire to the house, and ran. Brown emptied his revolver and rifle at me, but I escaped to the mountains."

In the mountains, Downen says, he was worried and harassed by fears of recapture. He knew that the country was being scoured for him.

"I walked," says he, "until I reached a small town, and was shot at by the night

watchman and went on to Sacramento. The night I arrived there Policeman Hunt was murdered, and I left town to avoid arrest as a suspicious character."

Downen now felt himself an outlaw. He was ready for any desperate deed. He had voluntarily adopted a life of crime and once committed to it there was no turning back. As an escaped convict he knew that recapture might overtake him in any State in the Union or in any country, and that no lapse of time would help him. The hopelessness of a criminal life began to impress itself upon his mind. He says he acquired the furtive look characteristic of all jailbirds and criminals.

At Sacramento Downen managed to trade a blanket for a gun and then he took to the woods to escape arrest for the murder of Policeman Hunt, although he had had nothing to do with the crime. Out in the open country he expected to find his prey. Nothing but a bold and daring robbery such as that for which he had been committed to prison would, he felt, give him new confidence in his powers and convince him that his years in prison had not weakened his courage or sapped his nerve. It was near Truckee that the first opportunity occurred for robbery. He encountered two men in the road and proceeded to hold them up. He jumped in front of them with the command:

"Throw up your hands."

The two Californians obediently followed Downen's command and allowed him to go through their pockets without offering resistance. Then Downen went to Colfax. He lounged about the town for a few days keeping his eyes and ears open. He was ready for flight at a moment's notice, and it need be would fight for his life. He was also ready for any desperate deed that offered a chance of profit. In the course of his stay in Colfax Downen heard of a local Chinaman who was about to return to his native land. Knowing the habits of the California Chinaman he inquired how much money this man was taking back with him to China. He learned that the Chinaman had drawn \$2,000 from a bank and he resolved to follow him and take it.

The Chinaman started out of Colfax with Downen on his trail. When they reached a lonely mountain pass Downen sprang in front of him. The Chinaman, however, ran toward a high cliff. Downen opened fire on him, but the Chinaman reached the edge of the cliff and fell over and was killed. Downen returned to Truckee without having secured the money.

By this time Downen had had ingrained in his nature all the characteristics of the habitual criminal. He was the kind of man experienced detectives would pick out of a crowd simply by their looks as suspicious characters. These traits of the criminal which he was unable to conceal led to his arrest in Truckee almost as soon as he had put foot in the town. The authorities were looking for the murderer of Policeman Hunt, and Downen's appearance was so much against him that they arrested him on sight.

So great was the local indignation that Downen feared he would be lynched. So he confessed who he was, told of his escape from San Quentin Prison, and was sent back there. Here for ten long years Downen worked among the other thieves and crooks who dwell within its gloomy walls. Then Governor Stoneman, of California, pardoned him.

Downen went to Santa Clara and again took up the life of a highwayman. On the night of February 21, 1885, a young man named Dreeschmeyer and two young women, Maggie Cahill and Mollie Canavan, left Santa Clara in a buggy for San Jose. As they reached the Alameda Downen jumped from behind a tree and commanded them to halt. Dreeschmeyer whipped up the horses and Downen fired. The bullet struck Miss Cahill in the right shoulder.

Her life was despaired of, but she finally recovered. Downen thought he had killed her. The identity of the highwayman was never disclosed until Downen made his confession to Chief Russell at Denver a few days since.

Downen next went to San Jose. In order to make a show of earning a living he did some work for a seedman, named Meggett, but meanwhile he committed every small robbery which was offered. It was at this time that his first murder occurred. The man he shot in St. James's Park he had never seen before. The only reason he killed him was because "he seemed to have some money," as Downen now says.

Downen next robbed a Mexican woman. For this he was arrested and tried, and sentenced to a term of seven years at San Quentin. He then joined some other prisoners in a plan to escape from the prison from which he had been released a short time previously. In escaping, however, Downen fell from a ladder on the prison wall and broke his right leg, becoming crippled for life. He was recaptured within a week. Then he served out his sentence. As soon as he was released he went to Spokane. There he committed a burglary. For this he was sentenced to two years, which he served. Upon being released he went to Park County, Mont., where he stole \$1,500 worth of jewelry. This he buried one dark night near Livingston, and was never again able to find the spot.

After visiting Ogden, Salt Lake and Cheyenne, Downen early this year came to Denver, his old home. He went to board with Mrs. Lichenfeld, at No. 1621 Stout street. He pretended to have business at the other end of the city. He bought a yellow bicycle and occasionally took a ride at night. It has now been found that these night rides coincided with a series of robberies that have been taking place about Denver since early in May. Here is the list:

May 7—W. A. Hopkins, at Ellyris.
May 11—J. R. McDonald, in Highlands.
June 27—Joel Ashworth was murdered.
July 11—T. W. Chapman, robbed near Lakewood schoolhouse, in Highlands, and John Williams, robbed at the same place an hour later.
July 14—Messdames Wagner and Webb, near Rocky Mountain Lake.
July 20—P. L. Logan, on Sheridan boulevard.
July 22—Mike White was shot, Mike McKenzie was shot at the same place the same night.
July 23—Downen met Captain Tuttle and Detective Duffield.
July 28—H. M. Keever and his hired men were robbed.
September 30—Robert L. Kane was held up near the Longfellow schoolhouse.
October 15—Mrs. Fred Lammers was robbed near Riverside Cemetery.
October 18—Mark Morris was held up and robbed at Henderson.

A curious regret expressed by Downen is that he robbed a woman in a cemetery. He now thinks it was a desecration of the dead.



THE ASSAULT IN THE CEMETERY.



THE FIRST CRIME AT DENVER.

SHOOTING OF MISS CAHILL.

